

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 042134Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5528

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 7405

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS-4

TAGS: PINT, CASC, CI

SUBJECT: ALLEGED CHURCH HARBORING OF MIR TERRORISTS, AND AMERICAN  
CHURCHPEOPLE

REF: SANTIAGO 7363

1. SUMMARY: GOC HAS GIVEN SENIOR CHURCH LEADERS INFORMATION  
COMPLEMENTING THAT IN REFTEL INDICATING THAT AMERICAN NUNS  
AND PRIEST ARE BEING SOUGHT IN CONNECTION WITH FUGITIVE LEADERS  
OF MOVEMENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT (MIR). CHURCH  
APPARENTLY HAS TWO AMERICAN NUNS AND A PRIEST IN A SECURE PLACE.  
CHURCH AND EMBASSY AGREE ON KEEPING PERSONS IN SECURE  
HAVENS FOR THE MOMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. ADCM MORNING NOVEMBER 4 TALKED AGAIN TO CATHOLIC BISHOP  
VALECH (REFTEL). VALECH SAID THAT HE AND RAUL CARDINAL SILVA  
HAD MET DURING MORNING WITH INTERIOR MINISTER BENAVIDES AND  
SECRETARY GENERAL OF GOVERNMENT BEJARES (WHOM WE SEE AS  
DIRECTLY REPRESENTING PRESIDENT PINOCHET). AS MEETING RECONSTRUCTED  
BY VALECH, GOC APPEARS TO BELIEVE THAT THREE AMERICAN NUNS  
OF SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME (SANTIAGO 7328) HELEN  
BARBARA NELSON, PAULA ARMSTRONG, AND BERNADETTE (BRIDGET)  
BALLASTY, WERE ALL INVOLVED IN ASSISTING FUGITIVE MIR  
LEADERS ANDRES PASCAL ALLENDE AND NELSON GUTIERREZ.  
GOC THINKS THAT THEY TOOK ONE OR MORE MIRISTAS FROM THEIR (SISTERS')  
QUARTERS TO THE COLUMBAN FATHERS HOUSE (SANTIAGO 7327),  
WHERE REFUGE WAS GIVEN AND MEDICAL TREATMENT PROVIDED BY ARRESTED  
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BRITISH SUBJECT DR. SHEILA CASSIDY. SECURITY FORCES FOUND

A WHITE CAR SAID TO HAVE BEEN USED TO CARRY THE FUGITIVES; CAR, THEY BELIEVE, IS IN NAME OF SISTER NELSON. GOC ALSO NOTES THAT AFTER DR. CASSIDY'S DETENTION, WHEN SECURITY AGENTS EARLY NOVEMBER 2 WENT TO HOUSE OF THREE AMERICAN NUNS, WORD HAD ALREADY GOTTEN THERE THAT THREE NUNS WERE BEING SOUGHT, AND THEY HAD DISAPPEARED. SECURITY AGENTS, THEREFORE, TOOK AMERICAN CITIZEN KATHLEEN MARY OSBERGER (SANTIAGO 7327) AND TRIED TO LEARN FROM HER WHERE OTHER NUNS WERE.

3. CARDINAL AND VALECH ALSO WERE TOLD THAT HOLY CROSS FATHER GERALD WHEELAND (SANTIAGO 7328) AND CHILEAN PRIEST RAFAEL MAROTO HAD BEEN DETAINED FOR HARBORING PASCAL ALLENDE (LOCAL RADIO NOVEMBER 4 REPORTED THAT MAROTO'S LAWYER HAD MADE REQUEST TO SANTIAGO APPEALS COURT FOR HABEAS CORPUS (AMPARO) FOR MAROTO).

4. FINALLY, BENAVIDES REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THREE NUNS (LISTED IN PARA 2 ABOVE) WERE INVOLVED IN CASES WHICH ARE EXPECTED TO LEAD TO CRIMINAL INDICTMENTS: TWO CIVIL JUDICIARY CASES AGAINST FLEEING MIRISTAS FOR ROBBERY OF CARS USED IN GETAWAY WHEN MIR HOUSE WAS RAIDED OCTOBER 15, SANTIAGO 7013; ONE MILITARY JURISDICTION CASE AGAINST MIRISTAS FOR THEIR TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. THE NUNS' TESTIMONY IS NEEDED IN ALL CASES AS ACCESSORIES TO CRIMES.

5. VALECH SUGGESTED TO BENAVIDES THAT GOC MIGHT BE WELL ADVISED TO CONSIDER THAT NUNS WERE INVOLVED NAIVELY IN ACTIONS OF WHOSE SERIOUSNESS THEY WERE NOT AWARE. WOULD IT NOT BE BETTER FOR GOC TO ALLOW THEM TO LEAVE CHILE, RATHER THAN HAVE TO GO THROUGH POSSIBLE COMPLICATION IN RELATIONS WITH FRIENDLY COUNTRY? BENAVIDES REPORTEDLY SAID THAT EVEN IF MILITARY CASE COULD BE AVOIDED, CIVIL CASES WERE ALREADY IN HANDS OF JUDICIARY, OVER WHICH GOC EXECUTIVE HAS NO CONTROL.

6. VALECH SUGGESTED TO EMBOFF THAT IF FUGITIVE MIRISTAS ARE FOUND, PRESSURE WILL BE OFF THREE NUNS, AND IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO GET THEM SAFE CONDUCTS OUT OF COUNTRY. AS LONG AS GOC WAS ON THE TRAIL OF MIRISTAS, HOWEVER, IT CONFIDENTIAL

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WOULD BE WISE FOR THE NUNS TO KEEP UNDER COVER. HE WENT ON THAT EMBASSY COULD BE SURE THAT SISTERS ARMSTRONG AND BALLASTY ARE IN SAFE HANDS. (WE ARE PROTECTING BARBARA NELSON.) IF SAFE CONDUCT COULD BE ARRANGED, HE WOULD BE GLAD HIMSELF TO SEE THAT ALL THREE NUNS WERE SEEN OFF AT THE AIRPORT.

7. VALECH ALSO INDICATED THAT HOLY CROSS FATHER PHILIP DEVLIN (SANTIAGO 7328), WHO IS SOUGHT IN SAME CASE,

IS IN SECURE HANDS.

8. VALECH SAID THAT NAME OF MARYKNOLL SISTER MARGARET LIPSIO, UNDER OUR PROTECTION (SANTIAGO 7328), DID NOT COME UP IN CONVERSATION AT ANY POINT. HE WONDERED WHETHER SHE WERE INDEED IMPLICATED IN ANY ACTION. EMBOFF ASKED WHETHER VALECH WAS AWARE OF ANY GOC INTEREST IN SISTERS FLORENCE RICE AND ELIZABETH GILMORE (SANTIAGO 7369). VALECH SAID IN THESE CASES ALSO THAT HE HAD NO INFORMATION.

9. VALECH AND EMBOFF AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE WISE TO MAINTAIN STATUS QUO FOR THE PRESENT, AND THAT THEY WOULD BE IN CLOSE TOUCH.

10. SANTIAGO PRESS REPORTS THAT BRITISH AMBASSADOR MADE REPRESENTATION AT FOREIGN MINISTRY ON DETENTION OF DR. SHEILA CASSIDY.

11. US CONSULAR OFFICER LATE NOVEMBER 3 REPORTED TALKING TO ONE OF SEVERAL MARYKNOLL PRIESTS IN THE SOUTH, WHO CONFIRMED THAT FATHER RICHARE J. SAMMON WAS FREE (SANTIAGO 7369).

12. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT CATHOLIC CHURCH IS HARBORING SISTERS ARMSTRONG AND BALLASTY AND FATHER DEVLIN, AND CHURCH UNDERSTANDS THAT EMBASSY KNOWS SECURE WHEREABOUTS OF SISTERS NELSON AND LIPSIO. WE AGREE WITH VALECH THAT IT IS BEST TO LEAVE THINGS AS THEY ARE UNTIL WE CAN DETERMINE COURSE OF EVENTS. WE HAVE NO INDICATION THAT GOC SUSPECTS AS YET THAT TWO NUNS ARE BEING HARBORED BY EMBASSY.

13. JUST BEFORE DISPATCH OF THIS MESSAGE, COPY OF  
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SENSATIONAL AFTERNOON "LA SEGUNDA" ARRIVED, WITH FRONT PAGE STORY ON EVENTS OF NIGHT OF NOVEMBER 1-2, ALLEGED COMPLICITY OF CLERGY WITH MIR, AND GOC DETENTIONS OF FOREIGNERS. AMERICANS NOT MENTIONED. LOCAL AP CORRESPONDENT ALSO ASKED TO TALKS TO EMBOFF IN AFTER-NOON. WE SUSPECT HE IS ON TO ATORY.

14. EMBASSY WILL AVOID ANY COMMENT.  
POPPER

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## Message Attributes

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